

Mahathir: The majority appreciate what I did as PM
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EXCLUSIVE Former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad is a deeply polarizing figure. For most people, it is either you hate him, or love him.

Those who hate Mahathir accuse him of using his 22 years in office to enrich himself, his family and his cronies, while setting the country on a path that led to the problems it faces today, including Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's grip on power.

However, Mahathir believes that the majority view him in a good light.

"I think while I may have, in the eyes of some people, done something wrong, but in the eyes of the majority, I think they appreciate what has happened to them," he said in an exclusive interview with *Malaysiakini*.

He admits there were some bad policies during his time as the head of government, but he insisted these did not impede the nation's growth.

"There was corruption, for example, but not to the extent that it stops the development of this country.

"People tell me that they benefited, they still say 'thank you' to me.

"The country grew much faster during my time than before, and that was because some good policies were implemented," Mahathir said.

He also quipped about people asking him: "Hey, why did you step down so soon?"

The 91-year-old said he did have some regrets from his time at the top, one of these for having "failed" in changing the Malays.

In the following excerpt of *Malaysiakini*'s exclusive interview, Mahathir delves further on the state of the country now. He also shares on his choice for the next US president.

The interview has been edited for language and brevity.

Is Vision 2020 still on track?

No, Vision 2020 is misinterpreted. The government thinks it's all about higher income. It's not just about higher income, for there are lots of other things that the country must achieve to become a developed country.

Among them is a highly-educated population, advances in the sciences, research work, industrialisation and lots of other things have to be done. Perhaps even one man can

become a Nobel laureate.

Are we on track to achieve any of this?

I don't think we are, because the government is just talking about high income, and its way to achieve higher income is just to increase the salaries.

When you increase salaries, its value, the purchasing power of the salaries will not reflect the increase in income because the cost of living will go up.

What do you think about our level of education?

Education is not being used properly to educate the people. And now they're cutting back on a scholarship, which means potential achievers are not able to achieve what they are capable of.

What are your thoughts on single stream schools?

Of course we want to have a single stream, but the fact remains that there is a strong insistence that there should be vernacular schools.

So, there will be vernacular schools, but it is hoped that these schools would come onto the same campus and people would be able to mix with one another.

What are your thoughts about Proton possibly selling 51 percent of the company to foreigners?

I have nothing to do with Proton now, I'm not allowed to talk to Proton at all. This is banned. But if you sell a national car (maker) then, of course you don't have a national car anymore.

You will become a consumer country, buying imported cars. When you buy imported cars, money goes out and technology doesn't stay here.

Analysts say that Proton bringing in foreign partners will actually boost the economy by increasing exports, because the international partner can bring Proton to an international level.

If so, I think we should give all our industries to foreign partners because they are more capable than us. You see, we will become a worker, that's all we can do if we don't upgrade our capabilities. Some sacrifice must be made if you want to improve yourself.

Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump?

Both are equally bad, but I hope it is Hillary.